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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAO](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (12/30): Calls for national unity
as the Israeli offensive in Gaza continues

Main Stories:

The three papers dedicate their front and many inside pages to photos and reports of the ongoing Israeli offensive in Gaza. The lead stories are written in red and white fonts against a black background. Al Ayyam's lead headline is "And the massacre continues..." with an above-the-fold photo of a bombed building. Al Quds leads with "The death toll increases to 350, including dozens of women and children" and an above-the-fold photo of a destroyed building on the campus of the Islamic University of Gaza. Al Hayat Al Jadeeda's lead headline is "The massacre in Gaza: 360 martyrs and 1500 injured" and presents an above-the-fold photo of a woman sitting outside her demolished building in Rafah. Al Hayat Al Jadeeda's front page also carries a photo of five Palestinian girls killed in an Israeli airstrike, wrapped in white shrouds for burial.

Al Hayat Al Jadeeda and Al Ayyam claim that the Israeli military is gearing up for a land offensive within the next few hours. Al Quds reports that 40 Palestinian children have been killed and 180 others injured in the last three days, and citing AFP, quotes a UN source that at least 57 civilians have been killed in the Israeli strikes. Citing the same AFP story, the paper quotes an Israeli source revealing preparations for a land offensive and saying that "the worst is yet to come" in Gaza. The three papers cite an AFP report that Egypt opened the Rafah border crossing to allow injured Gazans to enter Egypt for medical treatment and to facilitate the flow of humanitarian assistance into Gaza. Al Ayyam, citing an AFP report, carries a statement by the International Committee for the Red Cross expressing concern over the chaos in Gaza hospitals because of the large number of casualties. Al Quds reports that the UN and UNRWA have addressed a letter to the Israeli Defense minister, demanding an international investigation into the killing of 55 Palestinian

women and children in the past two days in Gaza. Al Ayyam reports on its front page that two Israelis were killed and 34 injured in Palestinian rocket attacks on Ashdod and Ashkelon.

Al Hayat Al Jadeeda's front page, and the inside pages of the other dailies, quote Israeli sources revealing that the Israeli air force is using American smart bombs recently supplied to Israel. The paper comments that although the bombs are designed to penetrate bunkers without causing civilian casualties, the number of civilian victims attests to their failure. Al Hayat Al Jadeeda also reports that the PLO has decided to halt peace negotiations with Israel and has called for an emergency Arab summit to discuss the attacks on Gaza. Al Quds reports that the Arab foreign ministers will meet on Wednesday, December 31, to discuss the situation in Gaza with the goal of finding a way out of the violence and "reconstructing what Israel destroyed." Al Quds, citing an AFP report, carries comments by Egypt's Foreign Minister Ahmed Abu Al Gheit revealing a Turkish-Egyptian diplomatic effort to put an end to the Israeli strikes. Al Quds also cites a Reuters report on its front page with a quote from UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon criticizing world leaders for not taking action to stop the violence in Gaza. Al Quds' front page further cites a Reuters report with quotes by a Hamas representative in Lebanon, Osama Hamdan, denying earlier statements by the Senegalese Foreign Ministry claiming that Hamas Political Chief Khaled Mishaal was ready to sign a ceasefire agreement. All the dailies front page statements by the Palestinian Cabinet and various political factions, demanding international intervention to stop the Israeli offensive. The papers also report that Hamas and the Islamic Jihad movements rejected a call by President Abbas to hold a meeting of all the Palestinian factions to

JERUSALEM 00002301 002 OF 002

discuss the situation in Gaza. Al Quds' front page reports on dozens of Palestinians injured during protest rallies that have taken place throughout the West Bank, Jerusalem, and many Israeli cities. Al Quds and Al Ayyam report on their front pages that the White House considers the Israeli offensive an "act of self defense," with Al Quds adding a quote from White House Spokesman Gordon Johndroe expressing concern over the humanitarian situation in Gaza. In its report on the US response, Al Ayyam claims that Washington unconditionally supports Israel.

Al Quds carries a story on an inside page cited from the Israeli daily The Jerusalem Post, quoting Amos Gilad, a Political Officer at the Israeli Defense Ministry, revealing that the Gaza offensive has nothing to do with the fate of the kidnapped Israeli soldier in Gaza. The paper also cites an AFP report quoting the Deputy Israeli Prime Minister Haim Ramon saying that the goal of the offensive is to topple Hamas rule in Gaza.

An Al Quds inside page reports on the killing of a Palestinian security officer by friendly fire during a raid in Jaba' village near Jenin in the West Bank yesterday, after the police force was attacked by stones thrown from the rooftops of houses in the Palestinian village.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Abdul Azeem Hammad opines in Al Quds under the title "A way out for Hamas" (12/30): "Certainly, today or tomorrow might not be suitable for Hamas to sign an initiative to return to national dialogue in order to re-establish [Palestinian] unity.... It is not expected or required [for a Hamas initiative] to occur under the Israeli bombardment, but the way out is for the movement's leaders to provide enough guarantees for Egypt to achieve that goal [Palestinian unity].... Such guarantees can constitute a prelude to Egyptian diplomacy in a regional and international campaign to aim to stop the aggression, as a first stage in a multi-stage comprehensive process for reorganizing the Palestinian house, and launch serious peace negotiations that coincide with the inauguration of a new US administration and the formation of a new government in Israel."

2) Rajab Abu Sareyyeh writes in Al Ayyam under the title "Gaza

awaits response by declaring unity"(12/30): "There are many requirements for resistance and steadfastness and they need to be launched immediately: there is a need to release the prisoners [in Hamas prisons]--not only to save them from being victims of the Israeli bombardment, but also to achieve internal unity--and to form a military/political leadership body to manage the Palestinian military forces in Gaza, and next to have a national consensus for a general administration for negotiations and resistance, which will take into consideration the reconstruction of Gaza and the launching of resistance in the West Bank. All this can be a gateway and the result of one choice, and that is internal unity, without which Gaza will drawn into a sea of blood, and in realizing [former Israeli Prime Minister] Rabin's wish for Gaza to be drowned in the sea, the West Bank will remain a stage for the settlers and occupation."

WALLES